

What You Need to Know About Asthma and Pandemic H1N1 Influenza

If you have a long-term lung disease like asthma, you may have increased risk for complications from influenza, including pandemic H1N1 influenza virus. Catching the regular seasonal flu or pandemic H1N1 influenza virus can make your asthma symptoms worse. So you should pay extra-close attention to your symptoms, and be extra careful about germs. Listed below are some things people with asthma can do in order to lessen your chances of catching pandemic H1N1 influenza virus and developing complications.

Wash Your Hands Often and Ask Your Family and Co-Workers to do the Same

- Scrub for at least 20 seconds (sing "Happy Birthday" twice).
- Wash between your fingers, under your nails and the tops of your hands.
- To print off a hand washing poster to hang in your home and work, go to:
http://www.lung.ca/protect-protegez/germs-microbes_e.php.

Get Vaccinated

The Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends the influenza vaccine for persons who have asthma (6 months and older). This vaccine will not prevent you from catching pandemic H1N1 influenza virus; however, it can help prevent seasonal influenza and lessen the complications. You should also ask your doctor about getting the pneumococcal vaccine.

Take CONTROL of Asthma

- **Care for yourself.** Know your body's reactions to stress, exercise, and illness. Learn to recognize the warning signs that something might be wrong with your breathing. Reduce the chance of these signs happening by taking your daily controller medicine. Educate yourself and the people around you about asthma. Additional resources are available at: www.injac.org.
- **Own and use an asthma action plan.** Everyone should have an asthma action plan. An asthma action plan tells you and your caretakers what to do when you are having and are not having asthma symptoms. To download an asthma action plan please go to: <http://www.injac.org/breatheasyville/asthmaactionplan.html>.

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- **Note Peak Flow Numbers.** Peak flow meters are an inexpensive device to measure how well your lungs are working. Your peak flow numbers will tell you how severe your asthma is and how well you are responding to medications. To download an Asthma Diary used to record peak flow numbers please go to:
http://www.lung.ca/_resources/asthma_diary.pdf.
- **Take medicines.** There are two types of asthma medicine: controllers and quick-relief medicines. Controller medicine should be taken daily, and is used long-term. On the other hand, your quick-relief inhaler should only be used when you are in your yellow and red zones of your asthma action plan, when you are experiencing asthma symptoms, or before exposure to a trigger like exercise. Also, always keep a filled non-expired rescue inhaler with you.
- **Reduce exposure to triggers.** This means you need to figure out what your triggers are. Once you know your triggers, the next step is to find ways to avoid them. Make sure you and the people around you know what your reaction is to each one of your triggers. Information on how to avoid triggers can be found at:
<http://www.injac.org/breatheasyville/>.
- **Open Airways.** To open your airways, take your quick-relief medicine, also referred to as your rescue inhaler, when having an asthma attack.
- **Live Healthy.** Do activities that promote overall good health. INShape Indiana is a statewide initiative that promotes the advancement of health through improving our daily eating habits, increasing the amount we exercise, and avoiding tobacco. To find out more about getting healthy go to: www.in.gov/inshape.

For more resources and information about asthma in Indiana, please go to:
www.InJAC.org.



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